

Patent
Attorney's Docket No. 031211-057

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Patent Application of)
Vanni L. BEGGIAO) Group Art Unit: Unassigned
Application No.: Unassigned) Examiner: Unassigned
Filed: February 2, 2001)
For: AUTOMATIC PROCESSING OF)
PHOTOGRAPHS IN A)
PHOTOGRAPHIC LABORATORY)

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir or Madam:

Prior to examination, kindly amend the above-identified application as follows.

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the specification as follows:

Page 1, replace lines 2-5 with the following:

--This application claims the benefit of European Patent Applications No. 00 102 348.0, filed February 2, 2000, and No. 00 107 134.9, filed April 7, 2000. The disclosures of these applications are hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety.--.

Page 2, line 2, after "Moreover" insert --,--; and

line 13, after "0 952 487" insert --, the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference--.

Page 4, line 8, after "Furthermore" insert --,--; and

delete lines 20 and 21.

Page 10, line 6, change "refed" to --re-fed--.

Page 12, replace lines 29 and 30 with the following:

--Other objects and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent from the following detailed description of preferred embodiments, when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings wherein like elements have been represented by like reference numerals and wherein:--.

Page 24, after line 8, insert the following new paragraph:

--It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the present invention can be embodied in other specific forms without departing from the spirit or essential characteristics thereof. The presently disclosed embodiments are therefore considered in all respects to be illustrative and not restricted. The scope of the invention is indicated by the appended claims rather than the foregoing description and all changes that come within the meaning and range and equivalence thereof are intended to be embraced therein.--

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1, 3, 6, 9, 12, and 13-17 as follows:

1. (Amended) Method of processing photographs in a photographic laboratory by means of a photographic processing system, comprising the steps of:
receiving customer orders and processing information respectively assigned to said customer orders, each customer order comprising at least one photographic image[,];

controlling the processing of each customer order in accordance with an assigned processing information;

[further comprising the steps of]

checking each processing information to ascertain whether or not the processing information can automatically be processed by said processing system; and

identifying those customer orders which are to be processed according to a non-automatically processable processing information.

3. (Amended) Method according to claim 1, [further] comprising the [step] steps of:

issuing a particular signal if a customer order is identified as not being automatically processable[,];

marking [the] an identified customer order to indicate the non-automatically processability[,]; and

at least one of separating the non automatically processable customer order from the customer orders which are automatically processable[, and/or] and processing the non-automatically processable customer orders with the assistance of at one operator.

6. (Amended) Method according to claim 5, wherein a plurality of said processing sites with at least one operator are provided[;], and wherein said non-automatically executable instructions are analysed with regard to at least one of which of said processing

sites [and/or] and which one of said operators is best suitable to execute a particular non-automatically executable instruction.

9. (Amended) Method according to claim 8, wherein at least one of said photographic film [and/or] and said prints are received in the form of a web, and wherein one of said plurality of processes performed by said processing system is that of cutting said web in sections, each section assigned to at least one photographic image and the size or format of each section being defined by the assigned order.

12. (Amended) Method according to claim 1, wherein during the process for said customer orders in said processing system, particular match codes are assigned to [element] elements of each said customer [orders preferably including a support means, e.g. a pallet,] order to monitor the progress of said elements of said customer orders and to assign said elements to each other to complete said customer orders.

13. (Amended) Processing system for processing photographs in a photographic laboratory [in particular for performing the method of claim 1], comprising:
a receiving unit for receiving customer orders and processing information respectively assigned to those customer orders, each customer order comprising at least one photographic image[.];
a control means for controlling the processing of a customer order in accordance with an assigned processing information;

[further comprising:]

a checking means for checking each processing information to ascertain whether or not the processing information may be automatically processed by said processing system without the assistance of an operator; and

an identifying means for identifying those customer orders which are to be processed according to a non automatically processable processing information.

14. (Amended) Processing system according to claim [12] 13, comprising:
a conveying means for conveying pallets along a conveying path; and
a number of supplying means for supplying elements of a customer order to a pallet such that a pallet is supplied only with elements of one customer order[;], wherein

[further comprising that]

said [controlling] control means assigns each pallet supplied with elements to the processing information corresponding to the photographic unit, to which the elements of the pallet belong[; and], and wherein

said [controlling] control means [controls] controls said conveying means such that those pallets, which are assigned to a non-automatically processable order, are separated from that portion of the conveying path which is allocated to automatic processing without the assistance of an operator.

15. (Amended) Processing system according to claim [12] 13, including a photo material processing device that comprises:

cutting means for cutting a portion of web of photographic prints belonging to one photographic unit into sections of different length, said sections representing at least one of photographic images [and/or] and index prints[.],

sorting means for sorting the sections in different compartments according to their lengths, said compartments being arranged one above the other[,]; and

releasing means assigned to each compartment for releasing the sections of each compartment such that they fall due to their gravity down onto a collecting means which collects the released sections ordered according to their length,

wherein the uppermost compartment is provided for index prints which can have larger dimensions than smaller prints, so that bumping means provided for stopping said small dimension prints have to be withdrawn, such that the index print or index prints can fall [on to of] onto the collected pile of prints when said index print is released.

16. (Amended) A program which, when run on a computer which is part of a processing system in a photographic laboratory, or when loaded in said computer causes or is capable of causing the computer to carry out [the method as claimed in claim 1] a method of processing photographs in a photographic laboratory by means of a photographic processing system, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving customer orders and processing information respectively assigned to said customer orders, each customer order comprising at least one photographic image;
controlling the processing of each customer order in accordance with an assigned processing information;

checking each processing information to ascertain whether or not the processing information can automatically be processed by said processing system; and identifying those customer orders which are to be processed according to a non-automatically processable processing information.

17. (Amended) A computer program product comprising [the program claimed in claim 16] a program which, when run on a computer which is part of a processing system in a photographic laboratory, or when loaded in said computer causes or is capable of causing the computer to carry out a method of processing photographs in a photographic laboratory by means of a photographic processing system, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving customer orders and processing information respectively assigned to said customer orders, each customer order comprising at least one photographic image; controlling the processing of each customer order in accordance with an assigned processing information;

checking each processing information to ascertain whether or not the processing information can automatically be processed by said processing system; and identifying those customer orders which are to be processed according to a non-automatically processable processing information.

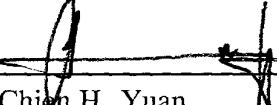
REMARKS

Claims 1-17 are pending in the application. The amendments were made to place the application in a more suitable form prior to examination. Favorable consideration is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: February 2, 2001